



CONGRESSMAN JOHN CONYERS, JR.

14TH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT, MICHIGAN

WINTER 2001

Conyers Convenes Civil Rights Leaders in Detroit and Washington

Congressman Conyers, alarmed by allegations of voting rights violations by scores of African Americans in Florida during the Vice President Gore and Governor Bush Presidential election, convened two meetings in Detroit, and on Capitol Hill with new Congressional Black Caucus Chair Eddie Bernice Johnson and CBC Members. Recent reports indicate that ballots in the presidential election were disqualified at a much higher rate in predominately black precincts than in predominately white precincts in Florida, Chicago, and Atlanta. Some of the allegations of voting irregularities include: African American voters being stopped at road blocks, turning qualified voters away from the polls who had proper identification, and over eight thousand African Americans in Florida were purged from voter rolls after being erroneously identified as felons. Approximately 40 other leaders discussed the need to coordinate legislative strategies to ensure that America's election process is fair, legal, and democratic.

The Congressman stated at the gathering, "I have met with Attorney General Janet Reno, and asked the Justice Department to launch an immediate investigation into voting rights violations that have negatively impacted African Americans throughout the nation. It is imperative that the next Congress, the Bush administration, the civil rights movement, progressive leaders and activists throughout the nation, come together at this historical hour and address these voting irregularities not by words; but through action."

"On November 7th, hundreds of thousands of voters may have been denied access to the polls for innumerable reasons. It could have been because of outdated election machinery, or that they were simply victims of overt or covert racial discrimination, or for other reasons we don't yet know about."

"The President-elect stated he is a "uniter, not a divider". His first obligation should be to support the United States Civil Right's Commission, as they conduct an exhaustive national investigation into voter irregularities; and to support the corrective legislation that will surely follow."

Conyers plans on conducting town meetings in Detroit, and possibly a national town meeting in Washington DC in order to hear the American people's views on the recent election and what to do to ensure a fair election process.

For more information about upcoming local and national events around voting irregularities, please call the Detroit office at (313) 961-5670.



Conyers and Members of the CBC announce plans for national hearings on racial profiling.

Upcoming Detroit Events:

VOTING RIGHTS AND ELECTORAL REFORM TOWN HALL MEETING

Friday, January 26, 2001

12:00 - 5:00 PM

**Coleman Young Municipal Center
13th Floor Auditorium**

EXPANDING ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

Saturday, February 24, 2001

10:00 AM - 2:00 PM

**New St. Paul Tabernacle
Church of God in Christ
15320 Southfield Rd.**

If you would like to participate in the winter town meetings, or would like more information, please contact Ray Plowden, at (313) 961-5670

Legislative Highlights of the 106th Congress

The Social Justice Agenda

Cong. John Conyers, Jr., Dean of the Congressional Black Caucus, and ranking member of the House Judiciary Committee, has launched several social justice legislative initiatives in the 106th Congress and plans to vigorously pursue them in the next 107th Congress.

In an attempt to reduce the sky rocketing prison population, now over 2 million, and address "the War on Drugs," Conyers is working with several CBC members and other organizations to introduce and pass much needed legislation in the 107th Congress that will focus on drug treatment, prevention, rehabilitation, and restoring sentencing discretion to the judge. There is a disproportionate number of African American men and women who have been incarcerated for non-violent drug offenses, and are serving extraordinary long prison sentences for simple possession. This is destroying people's lives, families, and the futures of an entire generation of black men. Mr. Conyers organized a nationally televised hearing on the "War on Drugs" and the need for criminal justice reforms on Capitol Hill that was broadcast on C-Span. Attorney General Janet Reno, former U.S. Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders, and other national experts on the criminal justice system testified at the hearing.

Judiciary Committee Round-Up

Traffic Stop Statistics Act

On April 15 of 1999, Mr. Conyers along with three Senate co-sponsors, Frank Lautenberg, Russel Feingold, and Edward Kennedy introduced a Senate companion bill, S. 821. The bill would require local jurisdictions to keep statistics on traffic stops by race. Subsequently, this legislation garnered over 61 bipartisan co-sponsors in the House and 21 bipartisan co-sponsors in the Senate. A court ordered study in Maryland found that more than 70% of drivers stopped on I-95 were African American even though they made up only 17.5% of drivers.



Conyers discusses police brutality with President Clinton.

Police Trust and Accountability

In response to the litany of recent high-profile incidents in major cities across the country, Rep. Conyers introduced legislation that provides incentives for local police organizations to voluntarily adopt performance-based standards to ensure that incidents of misconduct will be minimized through appropriate management, training and oversight protocols, and the police properly investigated if necessary.

Hate Crimes

Rep. Conyers introduced the bill to make it easier for federal authorities to prosecute racial, religious and ethnic violence by loosening the rigid jurisdictional requirements under federal law. The hate crime legislation was the focus of an intense effort during the 106th Congress; and was passed in the House and Senate. The bill, for various reasons, was never sent to the President for signature. The legislation will be re-introduced in the 107th Congress.



Ranking Member Congressman Conyers, CBC leaders, and Rev. Jesse Jackson at a recent press conference calls for passage of hate crimes legislation.

Violence Against Women Act

Passed this session. Congressman Conyers lead efforts in the 106th Congress to ensure re-authorization of grants for law enforcement and prosecution programs aimed at combating violence against women. The National Domestic Violence Hotline, battered women's shelters and services, education and training for judges and court personnel, and rural domestic violence and child abuse enforcement programs will continue to receive funding from Congress. The law also includes very generous protections for battered immigrant women.

Voting Rights for Ex-Offenders

The Congressman introduced this historic bill to expand voting rights for felons, and help reintegrate former felons back into our democratic society. Recent studies have found that 3.9 million Americans, or **1 in 50 adults**, are either currently or permanently disenfranchised as a result of state felony voting laws. On election day, more than **1.4 million** voting-age African-American men—more than 1 in 8—were ineligible to cast ballots because of state laws that strip convicted felons of the right to vote. The Civic Participation and Re-

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habilitation Act, which restores voting rights to ex-felons once they have repaid their debt to society, will be reintroduced in the 107th Congress.

Reparations

H.R. 40, introduced by Congressman Conyers, has been re-introduced in every Congress since 1989 and currently has 48 co-sponsors. The bill will require that a commission be formed to investigate the lingering negative effects of the institution of slavery on living African Americans and on the United States in general.

Asset Forfeiture

Passed this session. The bill places the burden of proof on the government—where it belongs—to demonstrate that property subject to forfeiture, creates an “innocent owner” defense, and permits a court to provisionally return property to a claimant on a showing of “substantial hardship.”

Electronic Signatures

Passed this session. E-SIGN ensures that contracts that are entered into on-line (through e-mail or on the Internet) will be given the same respect as contracts executed in the physical world. The law maintains consumer protections, and requires that consumers receive notice of their rights before they consent to receive documents electronically.

Expanding Health Care to All Americans

Universal Health Care

Congressman Conyers has taken the lead in establishing a new non-partisan Congressional **Universal Health Care Task Force**. The Task Force will (1) work to develop and pass legislation to achieve comprehensive, affordable, and high quality health care for all, (2) eradicate disparities in our health care system; in particular those impacting the African American, Hispanic, Asian, and other communities of color.

Quality Health Care

Introduced with Tom Campbell (R-CA), this bi-partisan legislation allows patients and their health care providers—not an HMO administrator—to make the best medical decisions regarding patient care by allowing health care professionals to collectively bargain through a limited exemption under the antitrust laws. This historic bill will allow physicians to jointly negotiate the terms of their contracts with health insurance plans. H.R. 1304 was passed in the House by a huge margin, but was not passed by the Senate. The bill will be re-introduced in the 107th.

Balanced Budget Refinement Act

The Congressman co-sponsored BBRA, a bill that called for a 40 to 50 billion dollar increase in Medicare reimbursements to health care providers. **BBRA 2000** helped pave the

way for the final budget deal in Congress. **35 billion dollars over the next 5 years** will now be channeled to Medicare and Medicaid providers.

International Affairs

Haiti

Mr. Conyers led three delegations to Haiti in the 106th, to observe the Legislative and Municipal elections in May of 1999, and to promote economic development. He also introduced legislation to protect foreign aid to Haiti. In addition, he and members of the CBC wrote letters to the Chairman of the International Relations Committee asking that holds placed on the “International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program” be released. He also wrote several letters in support of Haiti obtaining help in electrification of its rural countryside.

“One Day Of Peace Holiday Bill”

Congress recently passed into law a new national holiday, “One Day of Peace and Sharing,” which took effect January 1, 2001. As the original Co-Sponsor of H.R. Concurrent Resolution 363, the Congressman played a leading role in the bill’s passage. Mr. Conyers said, “The One Day of Peace and Sharing holiday has enormous potential to be a catalyst for the promotion of peace and understanding in America and throughout the world.” Detroiters celebrated the One Day of Peace & Sharing holiday on January 1, 2001 with a candle light vigil for world peace, and a sharing of ethnic food from different cultures.

Iraq

Mr. Conyers introduced HR 3825 which would allow the export of food and medicine to Iraq from the US. He also wrote three letters to President Clinton, along with other members of Congress, urging that economic and military sanctions be de-linked. There were also three town meeting/briefings on the issue of de-linking military and economic sanctions in Iraq.

Awards Corner

NAACP Lifetime Achievement Award

On April 30, 2000, the Detroit Branch of the NAACP and President Bill Clinton presented Congressman Conyers with the “Lifetime Achievement Award” at the 45th Annual Dinner. Congressman Conyers was honored for his 35 years of service to the people of Detroit and the nation.

Recognized for Korean War Service

On June 29, 2000, Congressman Conyers was honored for his service in the Korean War. He is one of two Members of Congress that fought in this conflict. This year marked the 50th Anniversary of the Korean War.

Honored for 35 Years in Congress

On August 14, 2000, the United Auto Workers and General Motors hosted “An Evening of Jazz” with Nancy Wilson and legendary jazz artists in honor of Congressman Conyers and members of the Congressional Black Caucus. The event honored his 35 years of service in Congress.

Detroit Initiatives and Accomplishments

Conyers Addresses Growing Health Care Crisis in Detroit: Secures \$1 Million for DMC

(Detroit, MI . . .) On Saturday, July 22, 2000 John Conyers convened a Town Hall Meeting to address The Health Crisis in Detroit at the Corinthian Baptist Church, Reverend Joseph R. Jordan, Pastor. He hosted the event in conjunction with The Coalition for Health Care Equity, the Council of Baptist Pastors of Detroit & Vicinity, The Detroit Medical Society, The Detroit Medical Center, Henry Ford Health Systems, Inc. and The St. John Health System. Approximately 250 citizens, many of them health advocates and health care professionals, participated in the event. The next town meeting on the health care crisis will be held on February 24, 2001 (see front page).

Congressman Conyers recently helped the Detroit Medical Center receive a **one million dollar appropriation** from Congress. Many Detroit hospitals have recently faced growing financial difficulties due to the 1997 Balanced Budget Act. The Detroit Medical Center is in need of more federal and state appropriations to strengthen and improve health care programs that benefit women and children. The Detroit Medical Center will now be able to help more women and children obtain high quality health care services due to help from Congress.

Conyers Intervenes To Prevent Abuse In Women's Prisons In Michigan

In October of 1998, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and Michigan legal advocates for women inmates reported serious allegations of human rights violations; in particular sexual misconduct by male guards in Michigan's prisons. Conyers held a series of public meetings at the City-County Building, and listened to stunning testimony given by both former female inmates and staff who reported severe retaliation for reporting abuses. The Scott's facility in Plymouth, Michigan was noted to have very serious problems. The public meetings and contact with the U.S. Department of Justice led to the removal of male guards from women in prison who have private quarters.

Conyers Convenes Job Fair For Ex-Offenders

Congressman John Conyers, in an innovative partnership with the City of Detroit Employment Connection, convened a **Job and Human Services Fair For Ex-Offenders** on July 28, 1999 at Cobo Hall. 650 ex-offenders attended the event. This innovative partnership was established to reduce the recidivism rate by giving ex offenders a second chance by ensuring that they have access to adequate employment and training opportunities when they are released from prison.

Constituent Services

For information regarding: White House Tour, Scholarships, Academy Appointments, Small Business Assistance and Passports. Please write or call my district or Washington office:

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